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EXAMINER'S STATEMENT OF REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE

REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE

The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance: One reason for allowance is that the prior art of record, particularly the reference to Munechika (Japanese document 63-224820), does not show that the punching tool 33 (Figures 2 and 3) has a pilot portion, which is represented by element 35A, with a surface area that is bounded by an arcuate portion of the perimeter of the tool end and a chord connecting the arcuate portion. The cross section of the tool or side view of the punching tool shown in Figures 2 and 3 are not evidence of the claimed configuration of the pilot portion. Further, while Munechika shows a main portion at 34 that has a surface area, Munechika does not give any details as to whether this surface area of the main portion is greater than the surface area of the pilot portion. Accordingly, claim 4, which is the broadest claim, defines over the Munechika teaching. Furthermore, the claims define over the Wanner (4,739,687) patent by virtue of the fact that "a third plane" is define as the transition portion "connecting the pilot portion and the main portion". Wanner shows "planes" that connect a pilot portion 20 and a main portion 26. Therefore, the claims define over Wanner for at least this reason.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

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INQUIRIES

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Examiner D. Crane whose telephone number is (571) 272-4516. The examiner's office hours are 6:30 AM – 5:00 PM, Tuesday through Friday. The examiner's supervisor, Mr. Derris Banks, can be reached at (571) 272-4419.

Documents related to the instant application may be submitted directly by facsimile transmission at all times. The Examiner's Fax number is (571) 273-4516. Applicant(s) is(are) reminded to clearly mark any transmission as "DRAFT" if it is **not** to be considered as an official response. The Office Facsimile Center number is (571) 273-8300.

DCCrane September 4, 2006

Daniel C. Crane

Primary Patent Examiner Group Art Unit 3725